

Communicating Through Uncertainty

A PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR LEADERS NAVIGATING
DOWNTURNS, RESTRUCTURING
AND POTENTIAL REDUNDANCIES

“

*People can cope with
difficult decisions.
What they struggle with
is not knowing.* ”



PRESERVE TRUST

Keep people informed
and reduce anxiety.



COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY

Say what you know.
Say it simply.



SUPPORT YOUR PEOPLE

Listen, respond and
show you care.



LEAD THROUGH THE UNKNOWN

Visible leadership
creates confidence.



TINA WELSH
ADVISORY

Creating clarity in complex organisations.



THANK YOU FOR PRIORITISING
THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PERFORMANCE.
Lead well. Communicate clearly. Build trust.

Why This Matters

“People can cope with difficult decisions. What they struggle with is **uncertainty**.”

Communication becomes most important when **certainty is at its lowest**.

During restructuring or organisational change, employees naturally begin asking questions. Some are spoken. Many are not.

When organisations don't answer them, people answer them themselves. That's when rumours replace facts, trust begins to erode and engagement starts to decline.

Communication isn't about making difficult decisions feel easy.

It's about helping people **understand what is happening, what comes next** and **why** they can **continue to trust** the organisation.

WHAT LEADERS SEE

- Announcements
- FAQs
- Town halls
- Consultation
- Business review

WHAT EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCE

- Anxiety
- Rumours
- Loss of trust
- Reduced focus
- Survivor syndrome



EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

Communication doesn't remove uncertainty. It helps people navigate it.



TINA'S PERSPECTIVE

In my experience, organisations rarely lose trust because they make difficult decisions. They lose trust when communication slows down after those decisions are announced. The period after an announcement is where leaders need to be most visible, most accessible and most consistent. That's when confidence is either rebuilt or quietly eroded.



What Employees Are Really Thinking

“Uncertainty creates questions.
Silence creates assumptions.”

When change is happening, most employees are not thinking about the organisation. They are thinking about themselves, their teams and their future.

These are the questions we hear most often during times of uncertainty.

If leaders don't **proactively address** them, people will fill in the gaps — often in ways that create fear, distraction and disengagement.



THE REALITY

People are not resistant to change. They are resistant to uncertainty, exclusion and feeling uninformed.

YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Answer the questions you can. Acknowledge the ones you can't. Then commit to keeping the lines open.



EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

People don't need all the answers. They need honesty, clarity and inclusion.



TINA'S PERSPECTIVE

I've seen employees stop asking questions not because they're satisfied, but because they've stopped believing anyone will answer. The organisations that maintain engagement are the ones that stay visible, stay human and treat communication as an ongoing conversation, not a one-time announcement.



The Leadership Communication Gap



It's not usually a lack of communication. It's a **breakdown** in communication.

Messages change as they move down the line.

Context is lost. Intent gets diluted. Assumptions fill the space.

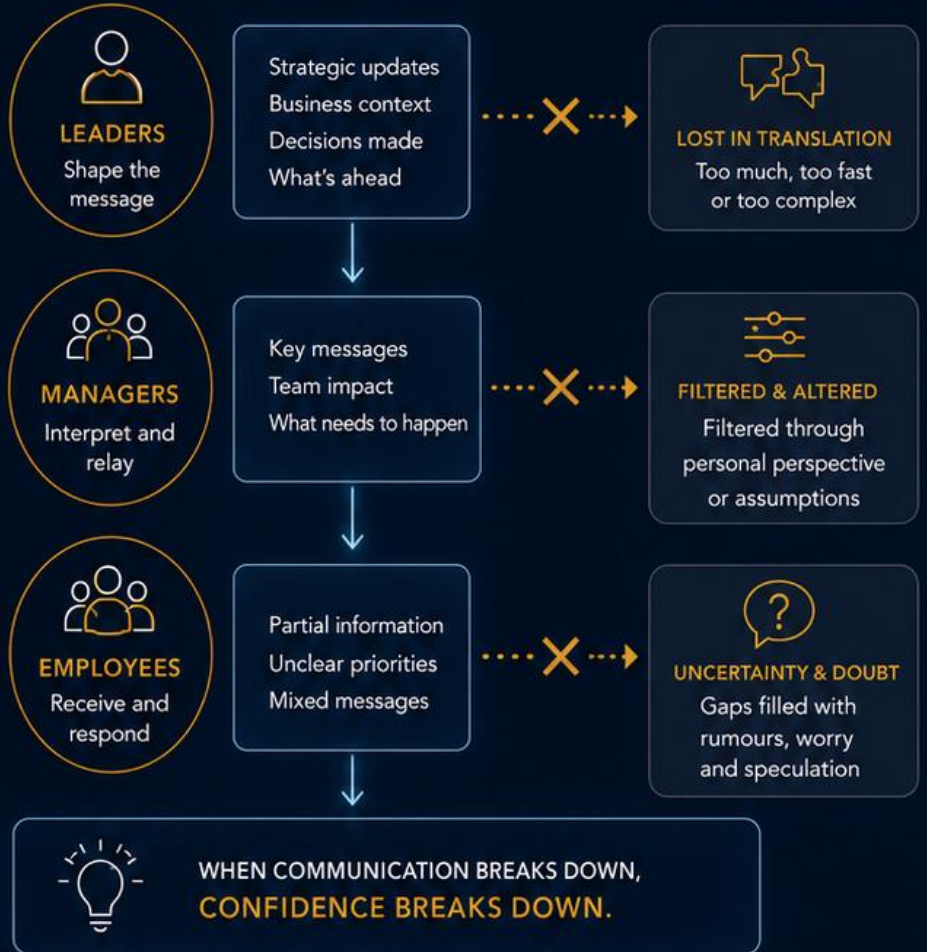
By the time information reaches employees, it often feels late, incomplete or unclear.

That's when trust suffers, rumours grow and people disengage.

Closing the gap isn't about **more messages**. It's about **better connections**.

COMMUNICATION FLOW

COMMON BREAKDOWNS



LEADERS SEE

Strategies
Decisions
Timelines
Actions



MANAGERS MANAGE

Information
Interpretation
Priorities
Conversations



EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCE

Uncertainty
Inconsistency
Anxiety
Disconnection



EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

The gap doesn't happen by accident. It happens by default. Close it by design.



TINA'S PERSPECTIVE

I've seen leaders communicate with clarity and conviction, only to have their message land in a completely different way. The problem isn't their intent — it's the system. Build strong connections at every level, and your message will land the way you intend.



The Manager's Role

“Managers are the **bridge** between leadership's decisions and employees' experiences.”

Employees don't experience change at the leadership level. They experience it **through their manager**.

Equipping managers with the right information, tools and confidence is one of the most important things leaders can do.

When managers communicate well, trust holds.
When they don't, trust breaks.

THE MANAGER COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK



MANAGERS NEED:

- ✓ Timely, clear information
- ✓ Practical tools and talking points
- ✓ Permission to have honest conversations
- ✓ Visible support from their leaders



EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

*When managers are equipped, they create clarity.
When they are not, uncertainty spreads.*



TINA'S PERSPECTIVE

Managers are often overlooked in change communication plans, yet they are the ones who carry the most weight. Give them information early, give them confidence and back them in the conversations that matter. That's how you create consistency, trust and momentum.



Communicating Through the Journey

“Communication isn’t a single moment. It’s a journey that builds confidence.”

Uncertainty doesn’t follow a straight line — and neither should your communication.

People need the **right information at the right time, delivered in the right way**, consistently.

This is what effective communication through change looks like.

THE COMMUNICATION JOURNEY



 **CONSISTENCY OVER TIME BUILDS TRUST.**
Silence over time creates doubt.

 **EXECUTIVE INSIGHT**
The worst time to go quiet is after the announcement. The best time to lead is in the next chapter.

 **TINA'S PERSPECTIVE**
I've seen organisations communicate well in the announcement, then disappear. That's when trust drops. The leaders who build the most trust are the ones who stay visible, keep listening and share even small updates regularly. It shows respect. It builds confidence.



Practical Leadership Actions

“Trust isn’t built by what you say. It’s built by what you **do next**.”

Leaders can’t remove uncertainty, but they can reduce its impact. These practical actions help you communicate with clarity, build trust and keep your people engaged through change.

Small, consistent actions from leaders make the biggest difference.

Start with these.

Do them well. Do them often.

SIX ACTIONS THAT BUILD TRUST DURING UNCERTAINTY

01



BE VISIBLE

Show up and communicate regularly.

- Share updates early and often
- Use multiple channels and formats
- Don’t disappear after the announcement

02



LISTEN ACTIVELY

Create space for two-way conversations.

- Ask questions
- Listen without defensiveness
- Acknowledge what you hear

03



BE HONEST

Share what you know, and what you don’t.

- Don’t overpromise
- Be clear about decisions and rationale
- It’s okay to say “I don’t know yet”

04



SUPPORT YOUR PEOPLE

Recognise the human impact of change.

- Check in on wellbeing
- Signpost support and resources
- Managers: have the conversations

05



FOLLOW THROUGH

Close the loop and keep commitments.

- Share what you’ve heard and what will happen next
- Keep people informed of progress
- Do what you say you’ll do

06



KEEP THE FOCUS

Help people see what’s ahead.

- Reinforce purpose and priorities
- Highlight progress and wins
- Build confidence for the future



LEADERS DON’T NEED ALL THE ANSWERS.

They need consistency, compassion and courage.

That’s how you lead people through uncertainty.



EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

People may forget the details of what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.



TINA'S PERSPECTIVE

In every downturn or restructuring I’ve led, the leaders who earn trust are the ones who over-communicate, listen more than they speak and follow through. They don’t have perfect plans — but they do have consistency. That’s what people hold on to. Be steady. Be human. That’s what leadership looks like.



TINA WELSH
ADVISORY

Executive Takeaways

“People may forget what you decide, but they will never forget how you lead them through it.”

Uncertainty will always be part of leadership. What differentiates great leaders is how they **communicate through it**.

Keep these principles at the centre of everything you do.



SEVEN PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
BE HUMAN	BE CLEAR	BE A LISTENER	BE CONSISTENT	BE SUPPORTIVE	BE FORWARD LOOKING	BE THE GUIDE
Show empathy and lead with respect.	Say what you can. Say it simply. Say it often.	Listen actively. Create space. Act on what you hear.	Keep your messages and actions aligned.	Help your people navigate change with confidence.	Keep people focused on what's next.	Your leadership provides direction when clarity is hard to find.



You can't eliminate uncertainty. **But you can lead people through it.**

Visible leadership, honest communication and genuine care build trust that holds, even when the future is unclear.



EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

In times of uncertainty, communication is not just a leadership task. It is a leadership responsibility.

Lead with clarity. Lead with empathy. Lead with courage.
Your people are watching.
Your silence is a message too.



TINA'S PERSPECTIVE

I've led through restructures, market downturns and periods of extreme uncertainty. The one constant I've seen is this:
Trust is either built in the tough times, or it's lost in them.
Communicate early. Communicate often. Be visible. Listen genuinely. Follow through. That's how you lead people well through the moments that matter most.



Thank You for Reading

**IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY,
COMMUNICATION IS
YOUR STRONGEST LEADERSHIP TOOL.**

The way you communicate shapes how people experience change. It builds trust, reduces anxiety and keeps your organisation moving forward.

You can't remove uncertainty. But you can lead your people through it with clarity, consistency and care.

**LEAD WELL. COMMUNICATE CLEARLY.
BUILD TRUST THAT LASTS.**

“

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WHAT YOU CAN DO NEXT



REFLECT

Take time to reflect on your communication approach and where you can strengthen connection.



TALK

Have open, honest conversations with your team — and keep the dialogue going.



BE VISIBLE

Show up. Share updates. Listen actively. Your presence builds confidence.



BUILD TRUST

Consistency over time creates trust. Trust creates performance.



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ABOUT TINA WELSH ADVISORY

Tina Welsh Advisory partners with leaders in high-change organisations to build clarity, trust and stronger connections that drive performance.

Bringing over 30 years of global experience in HR, communications and organisational health across the energy sector and beyond, we help leaders create the conditions for their people to thrive — even in the most complex times.

LET'S CREATE CLARITY TOGETHER.

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